

# **STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY**



Response to Request for Information  
House Higher Education Committee  
Interim Charge COVID-19 Pandemic

September 1, 2020



**Below is Stephen F. Austin State University's (SFA) response to the House Higher Education Committee's request for information related to the COVID-19 pandemic:**

1. Are institutions of higher education ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty and staff during the 2020 Fall Semester? When applicable, please speak directly to classroom and lab settings, dormitories and dining halls.

*Stephen F. Austin State University has been working diligently to ensure the health and safety of students, faculty and staff for the Fall 2020 semester. In May 2020, an eight team Open SFA Task Force was charged with:*

- *Reviewing relevant Minimum Standard Health Protocols (MSHPs) developed based on guidance from public health authorities;*
- *Examining the implications to university operations and programs of implementing these MSHPs; and*
- *Developing operational plans necessary for the safe opening and continuing operation of the university; then*
- *Helping guide the university community through the changes in operations and programs that would be required.*

*In late June the university community and public were informed of the plans for Fall 2020 via the Open SFA: Guide to Fall 2020 website: <http://sfasu.edu/fall2020>.*

*Classrooms and Labs*

- *Occupancy load and furniture setting plans that allow for appropriate physical distancing were developed for each classroom and lab space scheduled for use.*
- *Face coverings are required in all public spaces, including classrooms and labs.*
- *Hand sanitizing stations are available in all academic buildings.*
- *Enhanced cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces.*
- *Sixty-eight classrooms were upgraded with video streaming capabilities over the summer to allow for hybrid, hyflex and livestream class modalities in addition to face-to-face.*
- *Added to the classrooms with existing capability, we start the fall with eighty classrooms equipped to allow for de-densified occupancy as well as remote course delivery.*
- *Eighteen additional classrooms are being upgraded throughout the fall semester to bring the total number of equipped classrooms to ninety-eight.*
- *All instruction, in most cases, will be remote-only after Thanksgiving.*

*Residence Halls*

- *On-campus residency requirement for new students was waived for this year allowing students to choose alternate accommodations based on their desire.*



- *Traditional two-day move-in was sequenced over an eleven-day period with no more than 15 students moving into any one residence hall during a two-hour period.*
- *Staff and resident assistants have received enhanced training in how to maintain minimum standard health protocols.*
- *Occupancy has been de-densified to less than 70% and the number of single-occupant rooms has been doubled over last fall.*
- *Two residence halls have been set aside and equipped to serve as isolation halls for students who need to isolate from others while still remaining on-campus.*

#### Campus Dining

- *Facial coverings are required to enter the dining halls, must always be worn while in the dining halls unless seated at a table and eating.*
- *Touchless scanners have been installed at each cashier station; meal plan holders scan their own ID for entry.*
- *Seating capacity will be at 50%. Once seating is unavailable cashiers will only offer to-go options.*
- *All silverware is bagged.*
- *All self-serve stations have been eliminated*
- *Frequent and enhanced cleaning of high-touch surfaces.*
- *Increased availability of hand wash stations, hand sanitizer, 'no-touch' service options and targeted signage and communication to promote hand hygiene.*
- *Substantial and ongoing hand hygiene training for employees, an increased schedule of mandatory hand washing (every 20 minutes) and appropriate use of PPE (gloves).*
- *Additional controls have been placed on vendor deliveries to ensure the safe transfer of products.*

2. What plans are in place for on-campus COVID-19 testing? Do institutions have the capacity to provide testing on campus, both in terms of available supplies and labs to process tests?

*Our students and employees have access to testing via multiple channels. Our student health clinic can order tests for both students and employees. This testing is being conducted in collaboration with the hospitals in the city. To date the processing of these tests have not been hindered by supplies or access to labs. As of today our response time is averaging 36-48 hours. More information can be found online: <http://sfasu.edu/fall2020>.*

*Both students and employees are required to report via an on-line portal when they have had a test. This reporting even prior to a results allows our contact tracing to begin more quickly.*



3. If applicable, what are plans for collegiate athletics this Fall? How will student athletes be kept safe? If fans will be permitted to attend events, how will fans be kept safe?

*Currently, SFA athletics is moving forward with participating in a reduced schedule for fall athletic contests in football, soccer, and volleyball. The SFA Athletics Department is maintaining the requirements set forth by the NCAA Sport Science Institute in the Resocialization of Collegiate Sport: Developing Standards for Practice and Competition. The requirements set forth by the NCAA Sport Science Institute creates a consistent and detailed set of requirements to keep mitigate as much risk as possible.*

*At this time, a limited amount of fans will be allowed at home contests. Currently, the athletics department is preparing for 25-50% venue capacity, based upon federal, state and local guidance. Additionally, the athletics department will implement the following procedures for home contests:*

- *Mobile first ticketing solution;*
- *In-seat concession service application through Seatz and multiple concession pods throughout the venue(s) where applicable to limit gatherings;*
- *Seating in seats of 2, 4, 5 and 6 seat blocks;*
- *Physically distant tailgating polices as applicable;*
- *Masking; and*
- *Additional restrooms to alleviate congestion and gatherings.*

4. What do projected enrollment figures and formula funding look like to institutions for this school year?

*Enrollment for Fall 2020 is projected to be flat, both in headcount and semester credit hour (SCH) generation. Graduate enrollment and SCH generation are both trending at an 11% increase, which will impact at a higher formula funding. However, it is important to note that SFA's graduate enrollment represents 13% of the total enrollment, while the undergraduate enrollment represents 87% of total enrollment. Total undergraduate enrollment is projected to decrease -2.8%. Undergraduate SCH, which represents 93% of the total SCH, is projected to decrease -1.1%. The projected decrease in undergraduate SCH would most likely off-set any graduate SCH increase; thus projecting a flat enrollment and flat formula funding based on SCH generation.*

5. Has there been a noticeable impact on staff or faculty retention with regard to concerns about the pandemic?

*There has been no noticeable impact on faculty or staff retention as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To support faculty and staff the university has provided online class delivery options for faculty and students, and has expanded telecommuting options for staff.*

6. Health Related Institutions were exempt from the 5% budget cuts earlier this year, due to their important role in resolving the public health crisis. What are some of the programs,



research, and responses to the pandemic that our Health Related Institutions have contributed?

*Not applicable*

7. How have state and federal COVID-related funds already impacted budgets?

*Federal funds were provided through the CARES Act of slightly over \$10.5 million. Of this, \$5.2 million was legislatively mandated to be awarded to students as emergency aid; the remaining \$5.2 million is divided as follows: \$2.6 million allocated to instructional classroom technology upgrades and \$2.6 million allocated to fiscal year 2021 budget support. SFA received additional federal funding from the Strengthening Institutional Programs component of the CARES Act in the amount of \$513, 425, which was allocated to fiscal year 2021 budget support.*

*As SFA begins opening for the Fall 2020 semester, there is a recognition of the volatile economic environment. Families are experiencing unemployment, students have increased financial needs, and state revenues are lagging. Likewise, the university will experience additional costs associated with maintaining safety protocols. These include maintaining aggressive sanitization and hygiene protocols as recommended by authorities as well as increased custodial cleaning.*

8. How has the pandemic affected the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges?

*Not applicable*

9. Does your institution have a public, online dashboard for the reporting of positive COVID-19 cases which is updated daily? If so, what is the link to the dashboard?

*SFA maintains a public, online dashboard for reporting COVID-19 cases that is updated daily: <http://sfasu.edu/fall2020/cases>.*